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The
Heavenward Road.







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**THE
HEAVENWARD ROAD.**



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THE
HEAVENWARD ROAD.

BY
S. S. JONES,

AUTHOR OF "BEATRICE," "INTEGRITY," &c. &c. &c.

"Oh 'tis a bright, and bright'ning path,
That leads us to the skies."

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PREFACE.

PERHAPS, on giving a cursory glance over these pages the youthful one who has taken the book in hand may be inclined to lay it aside again, thinking it is written on a dull subject, and that the volume is utterly deficient in all that makes so many of the works now issuing from the press attractive: yet surely *truth*,—*glorious truth*, ought to have something intrinsically beautiful, and to be powerfully attractive, to those who, yet unhackneyed in the ways of this world, are just setting out in life.

The truths of which this little volume treats, are those which, above all

PREFACE.

others, most intimately concern the reader. A little longer, and the things to which those truths relate will be all that remain to us.

One favour the writer of the following pages craves of the reader. Let his or her heart ascend to God in one short but *earnest* petition ere commencing the perusal of them : " Lord, grant that to *my* soul, this book may be made by *Thee* a blessing."

It is but a short prayer ;—yet offer it in *earnest sincerity*, reader ; and the God who hears and who answers prayer will answer it.

THE
HEAVENWARD ROAD.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh, 'tis a bright and bright'ning path
That leads us to the skies."

LIFE is to us all, whether we wish it to be so or not, but a rapid and changeful journey. A few short years, or at most a few scores of such, and we shall reach its end. Who does not wish that end to be in heaven? who does not wish the dim shadows of this life to terminate in everlasting sun-

shine? so that the glory at the end of the journey may be a recompense for all the toil and roughness of the road?

To those whose first few years of this rapid journey have passed away, whose minds are unfolding daily, whose characters are not yet fully formed, and before whose eyes the world and the things of the world are putting forth their most ensnaring attractions, the writer of these pages will first address herself. An interest which is continually deepening in the welfare and happiness of the young,—love to that Saviour who has redeemed her; and under the covert of whose wings she herself finds it so sweet to rest,—induce her thus to address her youthful fellow immortals.

The life then of childhood, we suppose, has passed away,—childhood,

with all its bright mementos of "sunny places," and all those sweet irradiations which cluster round the path of opening life,—childhood is gone ! Its smiles as well as its tears have departed, and we almost wonder how such *little* things could have given such happiness, and such *little* things have caused such sorrow, as then stirred into tumultuous heavings the tiny streamlet of mortal life. We linger over the recollections of those early days with sweet, yet sometimes mournful feelings ; for some whose smile was then the heart's sunshine to us, have passed away ; yet, laid up as in a sacred treasury, the "beautiful memories" are loved and prized by us, and the remembrances of those days are cherished tenderly ; for even their sorrows have now the dim soft light of time long elapsed resting

upon them; the view is mellowed by the distance, and the bitterness which was then *very* bitter is subdued and softened down.

Childhood has passed away ; and youth, with its opening vistas, its brilliant hopes, its high expectations, and enchanting prospects, is now, we will suppose, before the reader : sunny paths are promising happiness ; syren voices are sounding in the far distance ; luring onward the youthful traveller, and telling that this, and that, and the other, are the brightest paths ; that here, the flowers bloom sweetly ; there, the fruits are delicious ; here, the music is enchanting ; there, all combined together, are waiting the young immortals hastening onward to enjoy.

There is another voice, and its tones

come sweetly and softly over the spirit. It is the voice of *Jesus* ! saying, "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*"

Reader ! let us consider—who is it that thus speaks ? It is the Son of God ! The high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity ! It is he in whose presence the seraphim veil their faces with their wings ! Who, sitting upon the throne of his glory, beholding all that is passing in the universe, bends in solicitous love over his weak and erring creatures on the earth. Thousands upon thousands minister before him, yet doth he regard with tenderness those whose dwelling-place is still amid the dust. He would have *all* to gain the happiness of heaven, and he points to the road which alone will lead them to it, saying, "*This is the way, walk ye in it.*"

“God is love.” He is deep, essential, earnest, compassionate love, even to us. The smiles that were brightest to us in childhood, whose sunshine, though now we hold them but in memory, seems the sweetest to us upon earth, told of kindly and rich affection ; yet not so earnestly did these loved ones desire our happiness and welfare ; not so deeply solicitous were they, that we should be happy, as is Jesus, our Lord, our Maker, our Redeemer. “*This is the way ! walk ye in it,*” saith he. “Lo ! I gave up my life, that I might purchase an entrance into it for you. The gate was closed, the seraphim guarded it with flaming sword lest such as you should enter. I unlocked the gate, the sword was sheathed in my own bosom, and now the way is open, walk ye in it.”

THE WAY.

And what kind of path is it to which the Redeemer is directing our attention? Let us look at it; it is called the *narrow* way; and the gate at its entrance is so strait that no cherished bosom sin can pass in thereat.

It is called the "path of the just," and the word of God declares that it shines brighter and brighter to the perfect day.

It is called the "high way,"—"the way of holiness." If we are travelling onward in it, it must raise us above the grovelling tendencies of earth; our hearts will get more and more of a heavenward attraction; our thoughts will get holier, our desires purer, our aims loftier. As we journey onward we shall be daily advancing towards

heaven, for this path leadeth directly away from amid the sins, and sorrows, and trials, and difficulties of earth.

It is the way of faith. Those who walk therein must give implicit credence to the word of God. That word must be our study. At first, religion sometimes seems to the youthful but a dull science, a wearying round of daily duty; a study which is but a poring over the New and Old Testaments again and again, perusing the same histories, or listening to the expounding of doctrines which have again and again been explained in our hearing; a singing of Psalms and Hymns, very fit for the aged, but dull and wearying work to the young; and sorely out of keeping with the high, wild beating of the heart that is just looking on the opening vistas of existence. Is it *not*

so, youthful readers ? Do not the flashy amusements of the world, the gay *outside* glitter and tinsel seem far brighter to thee than these holy things ?

Well, we will grant this ; we do get a brighter view when we look upon a treasure casket the gems of which are all on the outside, and showily set, even though we know that nearly the whole are imitation gems, and that those which are genuine are of little value ; we *do* get a brighter view when we look upon such a casket than when we gaze upon another, precious indeed, and durable as heaven, but whose rich guerdon of treasure lies all within. This is the case, reader, with religion ; its treasures are too precious to be given to the winds, too inestimable to be lavished on an idle world. The flowerets of immortality which bloom in

this paradise of God are shown only to those who have the pass-key from above. To *know* the bliss of religion we must *possess* it ; to be numbered one of the initiated, we must *learn* of God. Religion is *not* such a thing of wearying forms as has just been supposed ; that is the *world's* opinion of it, but it is a vast mistake.

The Guide book to religion undoubtedly is the Bible ; but there is a sphere of *influence* in which that book must be read, a certain nearness to the throne of God which brings us under his revealing light. This light, shed down upon the pages, unlocks their mystic meanings ; that which, to the world, is a dull, cold, wearying letter becomes instinct with power and life, for the Promethean fire has descended. Oh ! how often has the Christian, when

getting a glimpse of these glances, exclaimed, "I never thought of there being such a meaning as this, in such a passage ; how could it be, that I never saw this before ?" Religion, young reader, real, heartfelt, living, sincere religion is a wondrous thing. But the book of God is a "treasury," and the riches it contains are only revealed to those who search within it. Those who search the scripture find each day fresh beauties, fresh glories, that are strewn within its pages. The wealth of the Indies is but dust and dross, to the rich, resplendent, fadeless treasures that God's book contains.

The golden links of the promises are laid up there ; but when first we begin to search the treasure casket we shall find them as it were disunited, isolated from each other, and though each has

a heavenly lustre round it, we can as yet form no idea of their exquisite beauty when link shall be joined to link.

Ere long, in heaven, if we walk on in the narrow way faithfully, we shall look upon that golden chain shining in all the dazzling lustre which God's own love has given it; and the exquisite splendour and delicacy of its workmanship, as well as the perfection of its strength, will be our astonishment and delight.

The book of God is our "directory;" if we follow its guidance it will trace out a safe path for us, from amid all the snares, and difficulties, and temptations of this world; it will lead us to many well-springs in the wilderness; to safe, sweet shelters from the storm and tempest, to shady resting-places

when the noontide burneth, and to many fountains of blessedness even in this world, which those who take not this book as their guide can never taste. We must take the Bible for our book of direction; we must *rely* upon it, *act* upon it, *delight* in it. Reader, does this appear to thee difficult to do? At the *commencement* of the heavenward road, comparatively little is seen of the beauty or value of the book of God, but *pray* over it, *search* it, and its sweetness will flow out. It will bring a sunshine upon thy spirits even in affliction's darkest day, it will cheer and sustain thy heart in the time of trouble, it will be as an anchor sure and steadfast when thy spirit is tossed amid the tribulations of this world of trial, and it will be the beginning of the light of heaven to

thee when thou passest through the valley of the shadow of death.

The enemy of souls knows too well the value and power of the promises to let us enjoy them quietly; and when our spirits are resting sweetly upon them, his insinuations are sure to be whispered in our ears. "This promise, and the other promise, is sweet, cheering, delightful," saith the cruel deceiver, "but they are not for thee; thou mayest look at them as they lie in the casket, but they are not thy property, therefore delight not thyself in them." Young reader, give no heed to these wily suggestions; if they were not for thee, that enemy would be the first to persuade thee to take them. Remember, *our way is the way of faith, confidence, trust*, in God. He created us, and because we are of the fallen

race of Adam, we need these helps which the blessed "promises" secure to us. Therefore they are the words of our redeeming God to *us*. The Bible is not God's message to angels, it comes to us, the descendants of fallen humanity; and is intended by the God of heaven to restore our blemished human nature, so sorely injured and so deeply fallen, and raise it to a state of perfection, the blessedness and glory of which it is impossible for us, in this dim world, adequately to conceive.

It is our book of direction, and we may well rely on it; for it is written by that God who is our Father, who formed us from the dust, gave us these mysteriously-wrought bodies; gave us these immortal spirits, which so wondrously bear upon them the noble marks of celestial origin. It is writ-

ten by him who is himself our Saviour, shielding us from the sword of justice. The terrors of the broken law awaited us, but Jesus threw around us the arms of his protecting love. He bared his own breast to receive the stroke, and redeemed us from destruction, because, unworthy as we were, he had a *great love* for us. The Bible, then, is God's message to us; surely we may rely upon it. He has given it to us to be our guide in the "heavenward road": let us see to it, then, that we follow its directions.

CHAPTER II.

INSTRUCTION, AND THE INSTRUCTOR.

"If any man will *do* his will, he shall *know* of the doctrine."—JOHN vii. 17.

READER! these are the words of Christ. This is a promise of our God. It is spoken to those who wish to obey him, but whose understandings are yet spiritually unenlightened, so that they fail of seeing *clearly* what is the will of God concerning them. This promise at the head of the chapter is one that is laid up in the casket of the divine word; let us take hold of it,—rely upon it,—but remember the implied command with which it commences. Are we willing to *do* the will of God? His will in all

things is connected closely with our true happiness. This we must set down in our memories,—we must write it in our hearts. God *willeth* our happiness; his commands are but hedges which his love has planted by the sides of the narrow way to keep us from falling; his threatenings are but stronger bulwarks, placed where there is most jeopardy: therefore, whether we perceive it or not, we must set it down in our hearts that if *God* forbids us to do anything, that thing has sorrow in store for us: and if *God* commands us to do aught, to that which he commandeth there is surely, though it may be hidden, some sweet blessedness appended.

Now this promise declares that if we will “*do his will*”—that is, give up our will in submission to his—if we

will *trust* his love in his commandments where we cannot trace it, and, depending upon his grace assisting us, *resolve* in our hearts to be obedient to those commandments; then we "shall *know* of the doctrine,"—he will *teach* us his way. The promise is, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."*

"Consider," said one of old, "the *works* of God." Reader! look round upon this beautiful world of ours; consider his works in creation, how beautiful, how glorious! from the smallest floweret that gems the earth, up to the brightest orb in the deep blue sky: it is all his work. The winged zephyrs, as they float over us, seem to whisper of the God who moves them onward. The curling billows upon the ocean's

* Psalm l. 23.

breast tell of his majesty and power; and the rippling smile upon the sunlit sea seems to reflect back again the love of Him who bade that orb to shine.

Creation is a splendid volume wherein to read the works of God. But oh! there is another that is more blissful; it is the volume of his *redeeming love*. Reader! is it a sealed book to thee? By *nature* it is so to us all; but the grace of God can give a *new* nature to the human spirit,—can so quicken our spiritual powers,—so give clearness to our spiritual perceptions, that the glories of redemption are no longer matters of dark speculation to us; but as we gaze upon them in wondering awe, glory after glory is unfolded; we see that the volume of redeeming love is a *master-piece* of the work of God;

while the glories of creation, splendid as they are, seem but as the alphabet by which we commence that other and loftier study.

This God, then, whose works are so manifold and glorious, is he who seeks ever to draw us to himself. He know^s that he is the centre of all our happiness; and that unless he supplied daily, hourly, the springs of our enjoyments and comforts, the waters would fail; but he sees us too often rejoicing in the streamlets, and forgetting the rich source from whence they flow. He knows that by-and-by death will dry these streams up for ever, and he wishes to lead us to the fountain-head, that we may draw happiness and blessings from it as long as the everlasting ages roll.

This life is one of tumult. Listen

to the voice of God: "*Acquaint now thyself with me, and be at peace,*" saith he. The journey of life is difficult, for the paths are mazy, and the road often rough. Listen to his promises: "*I will bring the blind by a way that they know not. I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.*"

Reader! every link in this splendid portion of the covenant chain is *ours*, if *only* we will set ourselves to serve God. All thy life long the inestimable value of these links of promise will be revealing to thee. Amid the various vicissitudes of that life which is now opening out, thou wilt have their strength tested—their value proved—

and their celestial brilliancy heightened. Until thou hast *tried* the promises, thou canst have no idea of their beauty, their strength, or their value.

Do the will of God
And he will be thy *Leader*.

“Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to *profit*, which *leadeth* thee in the way thou shouldst go.”* Blessed are they who have such a leader. Earth may seem rough to them; troubles may surround them; the heaving billows of affliction may threaten to overwhelm them; but there is a hidden peace—a secret happiness—a deep, rich stream of blessing which the world knows nothing of, and it is *theirs*; for, “he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the

* Isaiah xlviii. 17.

springs of water shall he guide them."*

Do the will of God,
And he will be thy *Friend*.

"I am thy servant," said the Psalmist; "give me understanding."† It is a glorious thing to be a servant of the King of kings; for the highest of the angels, the brightest of the seraphim, the strongest, purest, loftiest, of the heavenly intelligences, count it their highest honour—their noblest privilege, to be employed by God. How amazing, then, the condescension which leads him to say to creatures of the dust—beings frail and feeble as we are, "Ye are my friends. Henceforth I call you not servants."‡ Abraham was the friend of God; Enoch was the friend of God; all the holiest who ever

* Isaiah xlix. 10.

+ Psalm cxix. 125.

‡ John xv. 14, 15.

lived on earth were the friends of God; and now, all of them who died in the faith are collected in one bright, blessed home above.

Those were the friends of God, who implicitly *obeyed* him; for this friendship is not one of equality; it is the God of the universe bending to the beings of the dust. On his part it was condescending love. On their part it was sweet, submissive love. They took his law for the rule of their lives; his word for their book of direction. They drew from thence comfort in all times of their tribulation, light in all seasons of providential darkness; wisdom, in all times of difficulty; guidance in all times of prosperity.

"They *walked* with God." And they found no companionship so sweet and comforting; no guide so discerning

and skilful; no guardian so powerful and vigilant; no friend so true and faithful. He was their Physician in times of sickness; their Provider for every want; their Consoler in every sorrow; their Upholder in every trial. Reader! if thou wilt *do* his will, thou also shalt be the *friend* of God.

Beware of *self-dependence*. "Commit thy way unto the *Lord*," saith the voice from heaven; "trust also in *him*, and he shall bring it to pass."

How sweet is this direction! how it leads us to the foot of the throne, with all our cares, wishes, anxieties, hopes, fears. Reader! hast thou no earthly friend to whom thou canst fully unbosom thyself? who can rightly understand thy difficulties as thou art setting out for the kingdom of heaven? No one who can enter into thy feelings

and sympathise with thee, in the yearnings of thy soul for the happiness that religion gives? Go to the footstool of Jehovah. The Everlasting One who inhabiteth eternity, was also "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." His eye is upon thee, as thine is following line after line of these frail pages. All thy ways are before him; he knoweth all thy feelings; he understandeth all thy difficulties. Of what inestimable value is such a Friend! Place thy dependence, then, not upon *thyself*, but on *God*. We need not go to him to *enlighten* him respecting our wants, for he knoweth them all better than we do; "yet, nevertheless, he will for these things be inquired of by the children of men." Mark, reader, how

loving is the motive which induces God to wish us to be much in prayer. The more we commune with a real friend and counsellor, the nearer and more intimate becomes our friendship. So is it between our souls and God. He *seeks* to have us acquainted with himself: and while we are striving to lay open our case before him, telling him our need, and asking for his help, we are laying at his feet our burden, and a heavenly calm comes over our spirits, as we feel how blessed it is to lean upon the arm of God.

Beware of self-dependence! our very *hearts* need changing; therefore what is there in ourselves for us to depend upon? Every human heart is by nature wicked, and will not obey God. If we follow their dictates we shall go astray continually; they, themselves,

must be changed ; and God alone can change them. Listen again to one of the promises laid up in the casket of his word : " A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." Listen again, still further—for it seems to get sweeter and sweeter : " I will put my *spirit* within you," saith the Lord, " and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."* Is not this just what thou wantest, reader? thine heart, hard and cold towards God and therefore sinful, changed? thy spirit so faded and fallen in its energies ; so tending to the dust, when it ought to be ascending heavenward ; so dark, when it ought to be seeing

* Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27.

light in God's light, renewed after God's own image, yea, changed into his *Spirit*? These are promises which in their fulfilment will raise, and rejoice, and ennoble, and glorify thee.

Let, then, our language be that of the Psalmist: "*Teach* me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. *Give me understanding*, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart."*

If we want *light* upon our path, none can give it as God can; for with him is the "fountain of light."

If we want spiritual strength to walk therein we must go to God, for "they that wait upon the Lord *renew* their strength."

Do we need help to aid us in pass-

* Psalm cxix. 33, 34.

ing through the strait gate that leadeth into the narrow but heavenward road? we must go to that Saviour who, in the days of his own earthly pilgrimage, declared it to be the way to everlasting life.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRAIT GATE.

THIS gate is humanity's great difficulty, and many will have come thus far in our book who have not passed through it; those who have passed through the gate will know well the unutterable importance of that step.

The way to Heaven is an ascending one; and at its entrance is placed a wicket gate, so strait that no cherished sin can pass through it. Those who

would enter on the heavenward road must be made willing,—nay, desirous, —*earnestly* desirous,—of giving up *all* sin ; or through that strait but blessed entrance they can never go.

Let us picture to ourselves a case. One of the fallen race of Adam has come to the determination of setting out for the kingdom of God ; and, in answer to earnest prayer, spiritual light has been given him to see the way that leads to that kingdom. Behold him as he stands knocking at the wicket gate, anxiety pictured on his countenance ; hope and despondency fluctuating in his heart : — he has knocked earnestly, but there is no sign of its being opened ; he knocks again more loudly, but all is still within ; there is no notice taken of his application, and Unbelief whispers that there

will be none ;—a deep shade of disappointed hope settles upon his brow ; but he takes courage and again he knocks, for Faith, though with faltering voice, whispers the promise, “Knock, and it shall be opened.” “Lord, open unto me !” rises in beseeching supplication from the traveller’s heart ; but the petition seems in vain, for no reply is given, no bolt is moved. “I told thee it would be so,” says Unbelief, speaking more loudly than before ; “it is mere enthusiasm to expect any answer.” “Knock and it shall be opened unto you,” again whispers the faint, yet cheering voice of Faith. “I will try once more,” murmurs the traveller with a desponding sigh, and again he knocks loudly, and again he cries, and with a deeper earnestness, “Lord ! open unto me, for Christ’s sake.”

"Who art thou?" asks a voice from within.

"I am one of those for whom this gate is fixed here," replies the traveller; "Lord, open unto me, for I would fain enter upon the path that leads to heaven."

Again the voice from within is heard, "It is a narrow path, and the gate is strait; if thou wouldst enter here, no *one cherished sin* can pass in with thee."

"I have discarded many sins," returns the applicant, "Lord, open unto me."

"There is a mystic charm in the gate," replies the voice from within it; "I will open it unto thee, but even then, if thou art cherishing any secret sin thou canst not enter." The fastenings are undone, the gate is set open, a scene of beauty is revealed to the

traveller's gaze ; but no sooner does he essay to enter, than a secret repellent force in the gateway drives him back.

"What must I do, that I may gain an entrance?" exclaims the poor excluded one.

"Give up thy *sins*," is the reply. "*No* cherished sin can enter here."

"I have done so, I have given up *many*," returns the traveller, weeping.

"See *here*," replies the voice again, and a majestic figure of *Truth* appears, and lifting up a mirror,* she lets a ray of heaven's light fall upon his heart.

"Alas! alas!" exclaims the applicant, clasping his hands passionately over it, for the light has revealed some secret idol that is cherished *there*, "if this be a sin, sure it is a *little* one."

"It will keep thee out of heaven !

* The Word of God.

Give it *up*;" is the reply,—the gate closes again, and all is still.

Days, weeks, perhaps months pass away, and then the same scene is acted over again. There is the earnest supplicating prayer; the knocking at the strait gate; and again the impossibility of entering with the cherished idol in the heart is bitterly felt; sad, disheartened, disappointed, but still clasping closely the secret sin, the traveller returns, but there is no rest for him; again and again he comes back, and again and again the sad retracing steps are taken. At last there is another petition mingled with the prayers, "Lord, *help* me to give up every sin; Lord, *enable* me to cast out every idol." Now, the petitioner is doing that which God advises. "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may

make peace with me; and he *shall* make peace with me.”* And who ever did what God recommended, and did it vainly? The idol, dearly and long cherished as it has been, loses its *hold* upon the heart. It is laid at the foot of a cross which stands hard by; and with weeping love the sinner looks up with the eye of faith to that Saviour whom he sees transfixed there.

“I suffered this for *thee*,” says the sweet voice of the spirit of Jesus in the sinner’s heart. The gate is thrown open,—the traveller enters, and a new song is put into his mouth, even praise to the *pure* and *holy* God.

Thus must it be with *all* those who would enter on the heavenward road. The strait gate *must* be passed through,

* Isaiah xxvii. 5.

and before that is done, every secret, cherished sin, must be given up.

All are by nature fallen and the children of wrath, and must needs therefore be made, by the renewing grace and almighty power of God, his children; and various, in its minute developments in different individuals, as is the variation in human character, is *this* change, as it passes over the heart. All that is evil cometh from the wicked one; all that is good cometh from heaven. Whatever be the way in which the change from nature to grace comes upon the heart, it is from above; it is the work of God. There must be a thorough change, in *thought, feeling, affection, desire, and aim*, and omnipotent power alone can work it. Reader, in however *small* a degree thou findest this change to be begun in thee,

thank thy God, and take courage ; but rest not in *beginnings* ; for we must be co-workers with God, without him we can do *nothing*, with him we may do *all* things. Remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, "Ye must be born again;" read and pray over the beautiful explanation of the seemingly mysterious words which the 3rd chap. of St. John's gospel contains ; ponder and pray over those verses: "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world* (oh! the mystery of that love), *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent*

not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," said the apostles as they went forth to evangelize the world: innumerable multitudes believed and *were* saved, and they have entered into their Redeemer's rest. *All will be saved, who accept of and rely on Christ as a Saviour*; for the blood of his atonement is *sufficient* for all the world, and *efficient* for all those who will put their trust in him.

Reader!—the punishment which all thy sins deserved was laid upon the "Lamb of God." He *bore* thy punishment,—he *offers* to thee his heaven. Yonder is the celestial Canaan! go up in the name, and clothed in the righteousness, of Jesus, and possess it.

The dust is thy place for thine own merits; but heaven is thy home for the Saviour's. "The wages of sin is death,"—but the free, unmerited gift God offers thee, is *heaven and everlasting life.*

CHAPTER IV.

HOLINESS TO BE THE AIM OF THE SPIRIT.

HAST thou set out on the heavenly journey, reader? hast thou, by the grace of God aiding thee, passed through the strait gate, and thus, with thy feet on the first rounds of the ladder, is it the hallowed, sacred determination of thy heart to ascend, till thou enterest heaven? "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," are still the

words of Jesus. Our enemy and God's enemy strives hard to break resolutions ; to tempt us to step backward to the earth again, and listen to the syren voices which in days past so often led us into error, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak," said the Redeemer, who "was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." There is no sin in being tempted ; but there is sin in giving way to temptation : and one temptation given heed to, weakens us against another. Close thine *eyes* and thine *ears* against them.

Sin in every shape must be put away,—holiness in thought, word, and deed, be continually sought after. Seem these requisitions hard, reader ? It is but in other words telling thee to put away all that will harm and pain

thee ; and that the purest happiness, which indeed God has inseparably joined to holiness, must be sought after in all thou doest. The human heart *loves* happiness ; it is the genial sunshine in which all its affections expand most sweetly ; it is the blest paradise, for the enjoyment of which its Creator formed it at the first :—and to which he is ever seeking to draw back again the fallen and banished ones.

Happiness ! its very name is music ; it is the master key, to which when touched the whole heart respondeth, and every golden chord of that harp of mystery trembleth and vibrateth to the melodious sound. Seek holiness : God has so perfectly joined these two together, that all who gain holiness find that the very fountain of happiness seems to be transferred into their own

souls;—whether from without, streams of enjoyment flow to them or not, there is *this* well of living water, flowing for them as the gift of God. Hate sin, for it draws man from heaven and happiness ; avoid sin, for it dishonour-eth thy God and *thee*.

His glory, and our true happiness, are both to be sought after ; how loving is the mercy that has so united these,—the two great *ends* and *aims* of our existence ! In seeking the one we seek the other also ; and in dishonouring God we degrade ourselves.

Hate sin, for it crucified the Saviour ; without his death and sufferings, we should seek in vain for heaven. When our feet stand within the gates of the New Jerusalem, and we are surrounded by all the splendours of the celestial world, our highest happiness will be

in laying our crowns at the feet of Him who loved and gave himself for us.

Jesus! how *sweet* the name! he was *called* Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins,—saves not *in* but *from* sin; saves from what brings misery into their hearts,—from the iron chain with which Satan has bound them,—from the fallen depravity of their own natures, from the surrounding pollutions of the wicked world, and saves them till they reach his *throne*. But then his people are all co-workers with him. Without Jesus we must fall before our enemies, without him we should only exchange earth for hell; *with* him we may fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, and enter into the paradise of God. Pray in the name of Jesus,—pray *to* Jesus; he, and he only, is our intercessor with

God; he and he *only* is the high priest who, in heaven, will purify our prayers by the blood of his atonement, and present them acceptably to the Father. We need no Virgin Mary, no beatified saint to come between us and Jesus; *he* is the mediator between us and the Father; and standing as it were midway between earth and heaven, with one hand he raises up the penitent sinner, while the other is laid upon the very throne of God. Oh! reader, redeemed by the Lamb that was slain! keep thy garment pure, that he has washed in his own blood. Sully not the brightness of thy crown, for in order that it might be given thee he laid aside his own for a season; and, while the angelic hosts gazed in astonishment at his humiliation, came to our earthly dwelling place, suffered

himself to be crowned with thorns instead of the celestial glory, humbled himself to the dust of death; and *his* head was laid in the tomb, that thine, O reader, in the brighter world might wear a diadem. *Sully not thy crown by giving way to sin.*

Much that the world calls innocent and lawful will not bear the test by which *thou* must try all things; remember thou hast enlisted under the banner of Jesus; and if a follower of him, thou formest one of the noble host of God.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,”* addressing his own people; therefore, we must not think of measuring lawfulness and unlawfulness by the *world's* standard. *Our test is the word of*

* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

God, and we must try *all* things *by* *it*.

If there be any matter which seems doubtful, let us go to God and tell him all our heart. Whatever we do, we must be *sincere*; he sees all that is passing in the mind: therefore, if what our lips utter accord not with it, he marks wherein the slightest shade of insincerity mingles. While thus endeavouring to tell our Maker all our doubts, uncertainties, our fears and wishes, his own cheering light will descend upon our spirits, and in that light our doubts will be scattered, and our path made plain. It *may* be, that *then* we may see clearly that to be *wrong* which we in our secret souls have been wishing to find *right*. Something perhaps which seemed desirable to do, and which the world, and even

some professors of religion averred to be lawful and right, but at which conscience remonstrated, and kept us restless. We went to God to get our minds relieved from its annoying whispers; and lo!—the voice of God has been on the side of conscience, and that is seen clearly to be wrong, which we were desirous of finding innocent and lawful. Then comes the struggle in the heart!—and what can we do? we must go to God again; for without him we can do nothing. We must ask him to *enable* us to lose our will in his will; ask him to mould *ours* in accordance with his *own*. We must do this *faithfully, sincerely, earnestly*; and it will not be long before we shall be able to give up the desire which, aforetime, was so dear to us:—nay, more than this,—while we

even give it up and lay it submissively at the feet of God, an inexpressible sweetness will come over our own spirits; and we shall not only be enabled to go on in the narrow way, but to go on in that way *rejoicing*. This is the sweet spirit of sacrifice, in which believers are able to offer up their *all* to God.

But, it may be that the thing was *right*, only the enemy of souls, taking advantage of our imperfect light on the subject, sought to harass and annoy. By our taking the matter to God, the designs of this enemy are frustrated. The Maker of heaven and earth delights in the happiness of his children; and he will set our minds at rest upon the subject. Thus we shall enjoy the freedom which God gives us with a zest that was unknown before,

because it will have the stamp of his own love and blessing on it.

Reader, it may be, that before setting out on the heavenward road thou hadst some worldly companion,—some one, perhaps, who was very dear, whose heart seemed as thy heart, whose society and companionship have long been delightful to thy soul, but whose aim is not now in accordance with thy aims; whose end is not to glorify the God of heaven; and now the face of the one is towards the world, the face of the other towards Mount Zion. The two can go on no longer together. The thing is morally impossible;—one of the two paths must be forsaken, or the loved and loving friends of former years must part.

It will be at the peril of thy soul,—ay, and of thy friend's soul also, that

thou goest back *one step*. Strive to bring thy loved one with thee; but, failing in that, press on heavenward, *praying in thine heart* for the one thou leavest; it may be that ere much time passes, that friend may follow and rejoin thee.

Let no loved companion say at the day of judgment, "Thou hadst more *light* than I had; and because thou turnedst back and went with me my way, I thought verily no evil would come of it; hadst thou kept on thy way heavenward, I also would have followed thee; but now,—we are *both* lost, and lost for *ever*!"

Holiness in our inmost souls must be aimed at continually. It is this stamp upon character, this *aim* of the spirit, that must mark us as belonging to the God of heaven. It is his own com-

mand ; and that it is so, is our highest, most blissful privilege. “Be *ye* holy,” saith the Lord Almighty, “for *I* am holy.” Mark !—how much there is endearing, and to us ennobling, in this command. It is the language of our Father who is in heaven. Surrounded by all the splendours of the celestial world, he is speaking to *us* ;—as much to us as if he had no other children upon earth. He claims us as his own, and wishes us to wear the insignia of our high descent. Reader, while yet thy dwelling place is earth, aim at the holiness that will be thy preparation for heaven. While thou art compassed about with the weakness of thy mortal dwelling, still it is the will of thy Father that thou shouldst wear upon thy heart *this* badge, proclaiming thee one of the children of the King. If thou

wear it on thy *heart*, all the manifestations of what is passing there will partake of its hallowed nature.

“Be ye holy, for I am holy,” saith the Lord, for he wishes us to bear the family *likeness*. The beautiful language of prophecy testifies concerning him, “He shall *sit* as a refiner and purifier of silver.” What a picture does this give of the refining process of the word of God. “I have *refined* thee,” saith his word in another part; “but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.” The ore is placed in the crucible; the fire burns fiercely round it; and the metal becomes fused. The refiner does not leave it, for it is *precious*: and he *sits* by the crucible while the process is going on. Again, and again, does he look,—*earnestly*—

intently into it. The dross rises as the heat increases; again, and again, is it removed; the silver and the gold become purer and purer; still, however, the dross and alloy are rising; and again and again they are removed from the precious ore. The fire burns fiercely, the scum arises, and again the refiner carefully removes it from the metal; he bends over the crucible, *earnestly,—anxiously,—intently* watching it; but, at last, a smile passes over his countenance, for there, freed from all alloy, the precious metal lies bright and pure;—a *liquid mirror*, reflecting beautifully the refiner's image. The process is completed; the refining work is done.

Thus must it be with *thee*, reader; and the more *earnestly* thou co-operate with God in this work, the less will

the *heat* of the purifying process be needed. Remember *daily* the words of God,—

“Be ye *holy*, for I the Lord your God am *holy*.”

CHAPTER V.

USEFULNESS IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.

“And he said, Son, go and *work* to-day in my *vineyard*.”

AND now, dear reader, if thou hast found the Saviour of the *world* to be *thy* Saviour, what remaineth but that thou wilt dedicate thyself to his service in that work in which he pre-eminently delighteth. Sinners are perishing round thee, numbers whom thou knowest,—nay, whom thou *lovest*, are perishing; tell them of the Saviour

whom thou findest to be so precious to thine own soul.

Love and adoring gratitude awake in thine heart the cry, "What can I do for *thee*, my Saviour?" Well, then, listen to his voice: "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto *me*."

Work for him in the church; work for him in the world; strive to lead others to the Saviour; strive to draw the attention of fellow sinners to Calvary: point them to the Lamb of God; strive to *live* the gospel, and strive to *teach* it. If thou art earnestly desirous of doing this, tell the desire to Jesus; and ask of *God* to point out thy work for thee. He knoweth best for what peculiar department of his work thou art most fitted, for he knoweth well, both it and thee.

God is the great *Superintendent* of all the good that is going on in the world. The mortals to whom he gives the honour of working with him must give up their will to his. We must not choose for ourselves, and then go to the Lord and tell him what we will do; he is our *Master*; he must *choose* our work. We labour happily while we maintain the consciousness of having him with us. In opposing difficulties he aids us; in every one we vanquish he rejoices with us. Blessed are his servants; even in this world they enter into the joy of their Lord.

Marvellously beautiful are the workings of divine providence; the same infinite variety, and perfection, both of execution and design, as are visible in the productions of nature, mark, with the royal stamp of the Godhead, all the

workings of his providential rule. Wheel within wheel, wheel within wheel, all are moving, complete, mysterious,—yet marvellously harmonizing. Man stands astonished at the amazing structure, wondering wherefore this, and wherefore that ; why this wheel here, why the other wheel there. Science with all its lofty achievements is confounded ; and when unaided by the divine Spirit, utterly *fails* in perceiving aught of the harmony, beauty, and benevolent utility of the whole ; pronouncing too often upon it with consummate folly and ignorance, that “the mighty machine had come together by chance, that chance has set it in motion, and that chances only will be the fruits of its movements.”

The child of God knows better. These are amongst the things which

God has hidden from the wise and prudent in their own eyes, and has revealed unto babes. The unlearned in this world's wisdom, if taught by God, can see order, and beauty, and wisdom, and love, in the workings of his providential rule; and the more carefully, lovingly, obediently these are watched, the more do the tenderness and love, and the perfection of wisdom and power in the designs develop themselves.

Those who with a humble, loving, and submissive spirit look to their heavenly Father as the guide of their steps in life, are never left without fit and loving direction; he marks out all their way, guides them by his counsel continually, and then, as the blessed climax, receives them to his glory in heaven.

Our part is to look to him to open out our path of usefulness. *His* part is to do it for us, and enable us to walk therein. Rush not on unthinkingly, following thine own blind guidance, reader ; God knoweth better than we do what we are most fitted for. Ask wisdom from above ; the Lord giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not ; ask him to appoint thy work and to fit thee for it, and by-and-by thou wilt see obstacles removing, doors of usefulness opening, and thou, in the strength of God, must enter therein and work.

“ Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey ;
He shall direct thy wandering feet,
He shall prepare thy way.

“ Thou on the Lord rely,
So safe shalt thou go on ;
Fix on his work thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.

"No profit canst thou gain
By self-consuming care ;
To him commend thy cause, his ear
Attends the softest prayer."

CHAPTER VI.

OBSTRUCTIONS IN THE WAY.

WE will suppose the reader setting out in the *work* for God, and, with heart filled with love to the heavenly commissioner, panting with noble ardour to do good to those whom Jesus has redeemed.

If we were in the heavenly world, all things would go well, pleasantly, and prosperously with us, when engaged in work like this ; but we have not arrived there yet ; and even while we are doing "the Master's" work, shall meet with many an opposing

blast, and many a strong current will set in against us. Nevertheless we must press onward, and see that the prow of the vessel be ever towards heaven; if we cannot make rapid progress in our work, we must neither swerve to the right hand nor to the left; beware of the Satanic suggestion, "Let us do evil that good may come;" but keep the *aim* heavenward, do what we can *uprightly*, and leave the rest. If we should turn from the *right* course, all these currents would be in our favour, and we should speed onward *rapidly*; but alas! alas! it would be *from* heaven, not *to* it.

How know we, but that, as it was with St. Paul on his tempestuous voyage, God may "give *us*" those by whom we are surrounded? therefore for *their* sakes as well as for our own,

we must keep our course straight for heaven.

Many will oppose us, whose best and highest interests we are most seeking to advance. Some will do it from mistaken motives, for we are all prone to err; others will do it because they hate our work: for the "natural" heart is enmity against God; but we must not let this discourage us, neither must we cherish resentful feelings against those who oppose us. If they are mistaken, let us pray that their prejudices may be removed; it is sad that they should thus, through mistake, hinder a work, which, had they more light upon the subject, they would strive with all their hearts to forward. If the opposers hate the noble cause in which we are engaged, how awful must their condition be!

Let us pray for them also, pray *earnestly*; *that* is a part of our own work. These are amongst the darkened in spirit, whose sad case brought Christ from heaven. Who knoweth but ere we meet them at the throne of God, these opposers may become helpers in our work?

We must pray much for our *own souls*; for, alas! alas! how easy is it for those who are earnestly desirous of advancing God's glory, and the salvation of their fellow-beings, to stumble at this stumbling-stone; and in the day when enemies oppose themselves, to be hurried into a spirit contrary to their heavenly Lord's. If our path be rough, let us take the more heed to our steps; walk humbly and closely with God, and, ere long, the rough places will be passed over; and we

shall tread again, and with a rejoicing spirit, the soft green pastures of the Lord.

It is a great work that we have engaged in; and we need not wonder that we meet with great opposition. This world is not our *rest*, it is our *working place*; and if all went on smoothly, where would be the labour? Our rest is above, and we are hastening towards it; let us work with diligence. Time is passing swiftly; a little longer, and the seed time for eternity will have passed away.

While in this world our opposers will be numerous; Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, speaks of "fightings without and fears within," and we, also, have opposers both outward and inward. These will all seek to hinder our work for God, but as it

was with the prophet in the olden time, so will it be in our case, if only we keep steadfast on the side of God. Whether our foes be visible or invisible, outward or inward, more will be with us than against us; yea, the mount is full of horses and chariots of fire between the people of God and their enemies; but this is the time for testing both our *fidelity* to God, and our *confidence* in him. Only let our *aim* remain steadfast, and all these troubles will be but as the blast sweeping over the young oak in the forest, settling it more firmly, and strengthening its growth.

Reader, strike then the roots of thy confiding trust in God deeper, and deeper; and these oppositions will in the end further thine own growth in spiritual and heavenly graces; cleave

steadily to Jesus, and he shall make thee as the cedar in Lebanon ; and many shall rejoice because of thee.

Personal piety is the fittest of all preparations for usefulness in the church of God ; without it talents will only aid thee in doing mischief there ; with it, if thou hast but one talent thou mayest work safely ; and, though thou mayest at times have to sow in tears, thou shalt, in due time, come with rejoicing, bringing thy sheaves with thee. Oh ! among all the boasted pleasures of the world, is there one that can compete with this : one so pure, so noble, so refined ? The God of heaven deigns to permit us to be co-workers with him ; Jesus, our beloved master, deigns to take us as it were into partnership with himself, in the glorious work of saving souls.

Think of the value of an immortal spirit ; here souls are midway between hell and heaven ; if they take the *upward* way they will for ever go on increasing in all the noble, blissful, spiritual perfections of the celestial world. That world will be getting brighter and brighter to them ; and our bliss in seeing them there, if we have helped them onward in the "heavenward road," will be getting more and more ecstatic. If they take the downward course,—while the endless ages of eternity are rolling, their woes will be getting heavier ; their doom will be getting darker ; their anguish will be getting keener ; Oh let us *strive* to save souls.

Swifter than a weaver's shuttle is this life passing. Some friends whom we see to-day we may see no more

till the day of eternity has dawned. Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, let us do it with our might ; discouraged by no difficulties ; for this is the very time for contending with such ; but the time is *coming* for rest, fruition, reward, and glory.

Doubtless the enemy of souls will often whisper, "If thou wert in the right way, and doing as God would have thee do, assuredly these difficulties would not arise ; for 'when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.'" Thus will he quote scripture to us, the feeble followers, as he did in the days of old to the Captain of our salvation. We must meet him as the Master did, with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." "In the world ye shall have tribula-

tion," said Jesus, addressing those whom he was sending forth in the work to which thou art devoting thyself; but then comes the blissful promise, "In *me* ye shall have *peace*."

The adverse circumstances we may meet with are only fulfilling those words of prophecy; we have a portion of the tribulation which the Redeemer said his followers should have: but listen to the voice from heaven. Oh! how it echoes amid the mountain troubles of this lower world! how it floats over the swelling billows of affliction! how it rises above the tumultuous voices of the tempest! "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Glory be ascribed to God; oh! praise him, reader, if thou, even thou, art counted worthy to suffer for his name. Hear his voice again:

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Jesus knoweth all things, and these, he pronounceth blessed.

Let us then fight the good fight of faith; hold fast the shield of our confidence; clasp more firmly on our brows the helmet of salvation; bind more closely to our hearts the breastplate of righteousness; fasten more securely to our feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; for when the road is rough we have the more need to have our feet shielded. Let us keep the sword of the spirit in our grasp; pray always with all prayer; and we shall wage a good warfare, and be brought off more than conquerors. Let us remember that it is a fight, and wonder not that we meet with opposition.

Reader, raise thine eyes to the celestial regions—there sitteth Jesus! he is conqueror now, but his conflicts were more cruel than ours are. “He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him.” We, if we have no earthly friend, have Jesus to comfort us; our enemies are conquered ones, though they are seeking to revolt. His foes were rampant, and all their fury was concentrated against himself. Yet he shrank not from the battle, for it was to save those he loved.

The Redeemer gained it for us, and he sends us forth now, to reap the fruits of his toil and sufferings; shall our hearts shrink at the prospect? nay, though enemies molest us, let us gather in the spoils. A little longer, and if faithful, we also shall ascend to heaven;

and we shall lay at the feet of Jesus the trophies we have gathered from off the battle field; we shall bring into the heavenly garner the sheaves we have gathered out of the world's great harvest; and we shall prove in the sight of countless multitudes, that we have loved him who in his love hath redeemed us from our enemies, and saved us from the hand of those that were stronger than we.

CHAPTER VII.

TO THOSE WHO ARE IN THE HEAVENWARD
PATH, BUT UNABLE ANY LONGER TO
WORK FOR GOD.

It may be that this little book may fall into the hands of some youthful believers in Jesus, the joy of whose

souls it has been to aid in carrying out the plans of the heavenly Master ; and whose hearts, in the deep fulness of their love and gratitude, have overflowed with affectionate solicitude for their fellow beings. They had given up themselves to the service of Jesus, and were exerting all their energies to promote his cause. Co-operating with the church of God, they were doing their part in the glorious and mighty work of "evangelization." It was perhaps but a *small* part, but it was that one which the Saviour had allotted to them ; and feeling how noble, how blessed, how God-like was the celestial occupation, their souls had "magnified the Lord" as they went on with it, and "their spirits had rejoiced in God their Saviour." To speak to others in the name of Jesus, to lead

the young towards the fold of Christ,—to tell them how bright and sweet were the living waters, how tender the Shepherd, how abundant the pastures; to lead them within the precincts, and rejoice with them in the Saviour's love;—this had been the delight of their souls; and wherever they could find a way open in which they could advance the cause of the Redeemer, there they had felt it to be at once a duty and a privilege to walk. But now they are laid aside; the hand of affliction lies heavily on them; they are withheld from taking part in the sweet worship of the sanctuary; they can no longer bear their part in the hallowed duties of the sabbath school; the various public associations of the church of God are denied them; and in the subdued quiet of the sick chamber,

day after day, it may be week after week, or month after month, their time must be passed.

Reader, if such be thy case, let not thy heart fail because of it. Thy God hath not forgotten thee, though for a season he is dispensing with thy public services. Thou art as dear to him there, in thy feeble solitude, as when actively engaged in public services for him, and it may be dearer; for the sympathy of no friend is so deep, so tender, as that of Jesus towards his suffering disciples.

Thinkest thou that he has laid thee aside in displeasure? Not so, for whom he *loveth*, he chasteneth; and though thou wast bringing forth fruit to his glory, aforetime, he is culturing and pruning thee, so that thou mayest bring forth more fruit.

Most likely thy place in the ranks is now filled by others; and a painful feeling of banishment comes over thy spirit, even while thou rejoicest that the work standeth not still in thine absence. Yet take not too limited a view of the great field in which the renewing work of God goes on. It is a large enclosure; embracing within the wide sweep of its limits the sphere of thy past labours, and *all* such; taking in every section of the church militant, every public portion of it, and every private portion of it; no little nook where good is doing is "without the pale;" there is no mighty union of energy in the right cause, no mighty grasp of combined power that is drawing men heavenward, but it is acknowledged and superintended by the Lord; and thy quiet chamber, suffering Chris-

tian, if thou art imprisoned there, forms a part of God's beloved vineyard; and thou thyself art a plant, over which he is now most lovingly watching; think not that thou art forgotten. What! dost thou not find that oftentimes the dews of the Spirit come blessedly upon thee? dost thou never find, even on thy sick couch, the gales from Mount Zion waft over thy spirit, as though the still, spiritual air were fanned by an angel's pinion? When thou thinkest of the things of heaven, dost thou never hear, as it were by the inward ear, the soft gushing strains of melody that float over that land of light? or as thou ponderest over these things, seemeth there never a momentary lifting of the curtain that hides from thee the better land? and though even while thy soul

is gazing, entranced with these glories, the veil descends again, still it has endowed thy spirit with additional strength to keep on thy way heavenward. It may be thou hast felt none of this; yet, if thou hast not, still the words of the promises of God are thine. God deals variously with his children, for he sees that the different individuals need different treatment; and such as will most bless them he gives them; for he looketh not at the present time only, but forward, to our future, and far nobler state of existence. He is seeking to prepare us all for that; and, in his love, while we are on our way towards it, deigns to use us in mutually blessing each other.

Think not that, because laid aside from active duties, thou art utterly disabled from doing good in the world;

thy voice of believing prayer can ascend to heaven, and God will in answer to it send blessings upon those for whom thou prayest, and assuredly upon thyself. Thou art brought by God *out* from the world, that thou mayest get more of heaven; he has taken thee *aside*, to teach thee. Art thou listening to his voice? Is the language of thy heart, "Lord, enable me to understand thy teaching, help me to learn *every* lesson which this peculiar time of training is intended to teach me, pardon my slowness of spirit, give me thy help, that I may learn of thee"?

Thou hast the promises, think them over; keep thy treasure-casket by thee, and, as thy strength permitteth, examine, search it. It may be that there is some special gem of promise in it, which thou hast hitherto overlooked;

and to call thy attention to it, and give thee to know its value, thy God hath brought thee into the quiet and stillness of a sick room. Art thou searching? if not, begin now: so shall the time of withdrawal from accustomed duties be a blessed time of profit to thine immortal soul.

Fret not with too anxious wishes for speedy restoration, but seek for the sweetness which submission to the will of God bringeth; endeavour to be ready even if thy God should see fit to call thee from the stage of earthly life; and, quietly reposing on the atonement of Christ Jesus, let thy spirit *rest* in peace. God knows best how to deliver us; think not that thy time for serving him is over, he has brought thee here to fit thee for more efficient and nobler services than thou hast hitherto en-

gaged in: it may be for services on earth, it may be for services in heaven; commit thy cause unto him; he will order all things rightly for thee.

"God nothing does, or suffers to be done,
But what thou wouldst thyself, if thou couldst see
Through all events of things as well as He."

CHAPTER VIII.

TEMPTATION.

"What I say unto you I say unto all,—*Watch.*"
MARK xiii. 37.

THERE is no condition in life, no stage in piety on this side heaven, which exempts the sons and daughters of fallen Adam from temptation.

The voice of the tempter is often sweet and silvery, whispering so gently, that the tones are scarcely distinguish-

able; yet distilling sweet poison upon the listening ear; and drawing the attention, particularly of the young disciple of Jesus, to the superlative excellence of *self*, that hidden idol of the human heart; painting, in magic imagery, bright pictures of real or fancied excellence.

The natural weakness, and inherent vanity of the human heart, make it but too willing to listen to these things; and, if intoxicated by the luscious poison, the disciple of Jesus, whether young or old, gives way to the suggestions of the tempter;—alas! alas! for his progress thenceforward in religion. He “that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet,” saith the word of God; take heed, beloved reader; and keep thy feet from the flatterer’s snare.

Those who in sincerity of heart set themselves to serve God, and receive his smile upon their undertakings, will be sure soon to have this subtle enemy at their ear, whispering sweet poison ; but let them see that they receive it not. He will tell of their zeal, earnestness, good management, skill ; he will whisper of their piety, and the purity of their motives ; suggest insidious comparisons with others ; and, with seducing words, beguile them from having a single eye to God's glory, if they hearken unto him. False views of things deceive those who listen to this deceiver ; false self-estimation destroys them ; *beware* of the flatterer !

It may be that this enemy of the soul may bring some well-meaning but mistaken friend, to tell thee of thy perfections and good deeds ; perhaps he

may whisper his deceivings into thy heart himself, but, from whatever quarter that voice of evil cometh, close thine ears and thy heart against it; and pray to thy God and Saviour to give thee true humility of spirit. Cry then to thy God to save thee; and trust only in the righteousness of *Christ*.

Sometimes the tempter seeks to destroy by raising to undue exaltation of heart, to pride, vanity, and vainglory; but sometimes it is the reverse, and he comes to us painting dark pictures of shortcomings and failures; telling that ours is the hope of the hypocrite; and urging to despondency and unbelief. God has given us the helmet of salvation, but Satan whispers, "it belongeth not to thee;" God has given us the shield of faith; and with subtle man-

œuvrings that enemy of our souls seeks to wrest it from our grasp. In every imaginable way the cruel spoiler seeks to destroy us, but remember, reader, the words of Jesus, "fight the good fight of faith." Well might the apostle say, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in *high places*." *

Perhaps this tempting deceiver may seem to let thee alone for a season. Thy heart expandeth beneath the sweet influences of God's Holy Spirit; thou goest on thy way rejoicing, for thy work on earth prospers, and heaven smiles. Thou art working for God, and no blight comes upon thy labours. God sends none, for he loves

* Eph. vi. 12.

it. Satan sends none, for he wisheth thee to forget, if it were possible, his very existence. Oh! how sweetly the seed of gospel truth thou art sowing takes root and grows. The dews of the Holy Spirit descend upon it, and upon thine own heart also; the language of thy soul, from early morning till slumber falls upon thine eyelids, is praise and thanksgiving. Yea, in thy very sleep, "thine heart waketh," and thou rejoicest in God for the great things he is doing for thee. All at once a change cometh; a blast sweeps over the loved portion of the vineyard which God committed to thy care. The hot simoom of temptation withers and scorches the tender plants of grace. Thou standest astonished at the saddening change. The dews from above descend still, but alas! the hot

and fierce simoom followeth, blight follows blight—blight follows blight.

Then ariseth the enemy of thy soul to accuse thee. "This is thy work," saith the cruel one. "This is the care thou hast taken of the portion God gave to thee; hadst thou been faithful to thy trust, doubtless this would have been averted; now, give up thy hope in God, for what availeth thee to trust in him?" Too many, in circumstances like these, *have* given up their hope, or if not that, have given up, discouraged, their working for God; and thus the enemy of their souls has succeeded in his efforts.

We are speaking to those who are workers in God's spiritual vineyard; or in other words, to those who have the care of souls. All this work of opposition could not happen without

the permission of God ; and at first sight it seems a contradiction. Are those who in sincerity are striving to serve God, mocked by him? Is he regardless of their toil? Does he suffer willingly the cruel destruction of the fruits of their labours? Is he inconsistent with himself? Oh! no. Was it not thus in the days of the primitive church? and did not God overrule it to the furtherance of his work then, the eventual fertilizing of his vineyard, and the everlasting joy of the workers? But it was a terrible trial at the time to their own faith; while it gave abundant cause for the short-lived triumph of their foes.

The plants of God's right-hand planting are not deeply rooted, till they have experienced some of these trying and troublous times. They are

plants that have to endure for eternity ; what wonder that they need to be strong and firm ?

It may be Satan will work against thee in another way. All goes on well with thee as before. Thou workest diligently for God, and rejoicest in the fruits of thy labours. No obstruction seems to arise, nothing thwarts thee as thou seekest to do good : day after day thou art working,—night after night thou thankest God. Thy work needeth the wisdom that cometh from above ; but thou seekest it from God, and he giveth it to thee. At length all this seems a thing of course ; because there is no change, thou forgettest that there may be one, and in thy prosperity thou rejoicest, and thinkest thou wilt never be moved.

All this is just as thine enemy would

have it be; studiously he keeps all quiet, lest thy spirit should awake from this pleasing slumber, for God commanded thee to *watch*! but thou thinkest there is no danger, and art slumbering at thy post.

Still, all goes well with thee, thou art not forgetting to be diligent in *working*, but thou art forgetting to be diligent in *watching*; thou seekest daily to do good to others, and when occasionally an earnest whisper, "What I say unto you I say unto all, *Watch*!"—comes across thy spirit, with its deep, murmuring echo, reverberating again and again over thy heart, thou puttest it aside, with,—“All goeth well with me, God is acknowledging and blessing my labours, this is a time of rejoicing, *there is no danger*!” Alas! alas! when is there such a time as

this on earth ? the time for a Christian in this world to cease watching against the foe ?—*never* ! All goes on as usual, till some morning, it may be on the sabbath, or some other day, thou goest to resume thy work, but ah !—the enemy hath been there before thee ; tares have been sown among the wheat ; there is bitterness for thee where for a long season there has been the sweetness of the grapes of Eshcol.* This is as the waters of Meribah, it is a time of unexpected trial, and, alas ! for thee, thou forgottest a part of thy Christian armour this morning. Where is thy shield of faith ? where are the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace ? Ah ! thou thoughtest that the road was so smooth that thou wouldst not want them, and the shield of thy

* Numb. xiii. 23. .

faith was left where thou didst kneel in prayer ere leaving thy chamber. Thou art wounded in this unexpected conflict with the enemy ; thou stumblest, for thy feet are not protected against this thorny path. The sword of thine enemy pierceth thee, because thou hast forgotten thy shield. Haste thee to thy Saviour, young believer in Jesus ; the city of refuge is open,—haste thee into it. The arms of the Redeemer are extended to receive thee ; flee to the Lamb of God ; and whilst thou pleadest with the *Father* the atonement of the *Son* for thee, the *Spirit* will descend and heal thee ; and thus the triune Jehovah will be thy help. Go to thy work again,—*humbly* and *watchfully*, craving continually the aid of God ; without it, thou canst do nothing,—in obedience to him, thou

canst do all. "*Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*"

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE YOUNG DISCIPLE IN THE NEAR PROSPECT OF DEATH.

"Sky-born, sky-guided, sky-returning race."
YOUNG.

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither, in the north wind's
breath;

And stars to set; but all,
All own alike the unsparing hand of death.

Youth and the opening rose
May look like things too glorious for decay,
And smile at thee,—but thou art not of those
That wait the ripened bloom to seize their prey."
MRS. HEMANS.

EXQUISITE in beauty, as well as affecting in their truth, are the foregoing lines; and if amongst those whose eyes may rest on these pages,

there should be any whose earthly career is expected soon to close, the writer would fain address a few of these pages to them. If such be thy case, reader, accept these thoughts from the pen and heart of a fellow-being; one whose own day of life, for aught she knows, may close speedily, but who has long found in religion her sweetest rest, and who looks forward to its supporting her when her own time for exchanging worlds shall come. Life then to thee has been a brief, yet doubtless a varying, journey, for to most individuals clouds and sunshine mark the April day of life. On looking back upon the past, doubtless many a beautiful oasis rises before the eye of memory, and recollection kindles, as thou thinkest over the *happy* days. Yet the days of thy pilgrimage

have not been all such; there have been shadows coming over the picture, clouds rising here and there, obscuring the bright sunshine. To some these clouds are very dark, very dense, very portentous; and even the memory of them brings a sort of chill and sadness upon the heart. But thou art going now to a land where such clouds rise not,—to a sunshine that was never clouded,—to a home, the brightness of which was never dimmed,—to a resting-place where the weariness of disease cometh not,—to a haven of repose where the tempest-tossed billows of earthly life shall never reach thee.

It may be that thou hast been long drooping under the withering breath of blighting disease; striving but in vain to bear up beneath it; feebly endeavouring to act thy part in life, with

the vigour, and alacrity, and strength which were thy characteristics in former times! but the worm was at the root of the bud, the springs of life faded, thou grewest weaker and weaker; till succumbing at length to the increasing weight of illness, thou art laid aside, not from the presence, or tenderness, or love, or care of thy heavenly Father; but from all active engagement in his work; and little doubt now perhaps remaineth, but that soon the days of thy life's journey will be ended.

Death is to all a *solemn* thing;—it is a *great* solemnity; but to the believer in Jesus, death is fraught with the most sublime associations, with the most glorious hopes. It has been the joy of thy heart to do the will of thy heavenly Master; well, thou art going

to be with him; and thou wilt do it for ever and ever. Many obstructions have arisen as thou soughtest to devote thyself to his service; and though thy devotion has been sincere, the offering has been but a very imperfect one;—for frailty, weakness, and imperfection mark and blemish all earthly things. But the land into which thou wilt soon enter is one in which thou thyself wilt be perfected, and there thou wilt offer to the Lord a fitting service.

Here thou hast had to mourn over much that was lacking in thyself, and in the still solitude of thy chamber oft hast wept over thine own shortcomings; but there, thou wilt have none of this: for thine own nature shall be perfected, thy powers shall be strengthened, thy perceptions shall be quick-

ened, thine affections shall be sanctified. There will be no erring heart in thee, clinging, as it now does, to earth or earthly things ;—no slowness of spirit, when thou oughtest to be swift as the seraphim, to understand and to do the work of God ;—no darkness of intellect, keeping thee out of the happiness which a fuller, clearer view of God's providential dealings would give thee ; but all shall be light, and purity, and love, and joy.

Thou thyself wilt be perfected, and the world round thee will be perfect. Think of the society with whom thou wilt soon be mingling ; if we could now behold one perfected spirit, how our very souls would fall prostrate in the dust, under a sense of our own inferiority ; and while love would attract us towards such a one, the

glory of his holiness would drive us back. Think of the thousands of those who are now mingling their voices in the lofty anthems of heaven ; theirs is a host which no man can number ; for out of every nation, and kingdom, and people, and tongue, all the purest, the noblest, the best, are there gathered.

Through all ages of the world that band has been augmenting ; and even to the end, host after host of the redeemed will be rising to join it. Hark ! Thine ear can almost hear the rich music of their voices, as they are chanting their hallelujahs to Him who loved and gave himself for them. Believer in Jesus ! thy voice, though now so feeble, if thou art faithful unto death, will soon join in those lofty ascriptions ; thy spirit will soon mingle in the ecstatic worship of the heaven

of heavens. It has been thy delight to do thy Master's will *below*, but oh, the ineffable bliss of doing it *above*! Here, when thy faith hath been strong, and given thee a glimpse, if but for a moment, of the happiness of heaven, the powers of thy soul have been invigorated, thy spirit hath so rejoiced in the hopes of that glory, that thou hast hasted on heavenward, and the tempter with his baits and snares had but little power over thee; for thy faith had been to thee the "*substance* of things not seen." And, with the grapes of Eschol between thy lips, the coarse gratifications with which he tempted thee were refused at once. Yet now ere long, it will not be a glimpse only of this happiness that will be thine. A little longer, and thy sick chamber will be ex-

changed for the palace of thy God ; thy weariness and languor for strength, vigour, and all the vivacity and spring of celestial, unfading youth. In the dreamy slumbers of thy sick room, visions of by-past memories haunt thee ; and, while confined to a couch of weakness, 'twixt sleep and waking, thou hast seemed to roam again in the sweet meadows where thy childhood wandered, and the music of the running brook has been in thine ear, and the sweet melody of the song-bird seemed to float amid the branches, while thou wast gathering fair wild flowers below. It may be, that scenes like these thou shalt see no more in this world. The spring and energy of youth are gone ; but with thee it shall be as the high noon-tide, following quickly after the descending day. Thy

God is not giving thee the long evening of old age. Thy sun goeth down rapidly, but the shadows of night will be but for a moment, and the splendour of another noon is just at hand. See! there is the morning star of hope already rising in thy heavens; a little longer, and the light of the everlasting day will be *all around thee*; the bursting glories dawn already on thy spirit; the songs of the archangels will soon greet thine entrance into heaven; and thou wilt enter, ushered into that world by ministering spirits, who have loved and watched over thee in this.

Doubtless there are many there whom thou hast known in this life. Their dim, earthly dawning of existence is over: and since thou last beheldest them, they have been mingling with the glorified; uniting in their

worship, joining in the blissful avocations of the land of light; and swift, unencumbered in all their movements; clothed in the celestial robes of that bright and blissful dwelling; purified—beatified—glorified! “They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.”

Believer in Jesus! the thoughts and hopes of these things are such as earth, with all its boasted glories, could never give thee; thou owest them to the revelations which thy God hath given, of the riches of his grace, to weak and erring mortals. Not only has he prepared for his people a futurity of happiness, but he sheds down upon their path in this life rays of the brightness of the better land. He loved thee, and gave himself for thee. The hallowed

influences of his Spirit have drawn the affections of thine own heart towards him: for, at one time, thou knewest not, neither *lovedst* thy God; but to those that *believe*, he *is precious*. A little longer, and he will bring thee into his own dwelling; thou shalt have a place near to him; "fast by the throne of God" will be thy station; and to do his behests, holding communings sweet, and high, and sacred, with *Him*, loving and rejoicing in *His* love, the never-ending day of thy glorious eternity will pass onward.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

"Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

While the tide of thy life is rapidly ebbing, still strive to do somewhat for thy Master ; somewhat for thy beloved fellow beings ; somewhat to lead those who know not God to the sweet resting place which is so blissful to thine own soul. Tell them of Jesus ; draw them to Jesus ; pray for them to Jesus ; and it may be that at last thou shalt meet them at the right hand of Jesus. Blessed word,—Jesus ! What sweet music it is to the dying believer ! how it echoes and re-echoes over the heart ! every response getting sweeter and sweeter ; every fresh revelation of it waking a fuller, and a richer joy ; till it blends at last in all the gushing glories and enrapturing melodies of heaven.

CHAPTER X.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET JOINED
ANY SECTION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

READER ! having followed the young disciple of Jesus through many of the variations in the path heavenward, permit the writer to address a word or two to thee also.

Art thou undecided still in the matter of religion ? if so, give it once more thine earnest attention. What is religion ? Is it not the constant communion with God, and gradual assimilation of the soul to his character ? Assimilation in the nature of its thoughts,—the character of its desires,

—the tendencies of its affections,—the aims and purposes of its life? Can there be anything nobler than this?—anything on this side heaven more truly elevating to a human spirit? “Ah, but,” say you, “if this be religion, there are very few religious people.”

Consider again : are the marks which we have given external in their nature or internal? They are mainly internal : the thoughts, the motives, the affections, the aims, are the things spoken of. We have an Exemplar,—Christ Jesus ; we have a rule of life,—his own word,—wherein he tells us, concerning religious professors, “By their fruits ye shall know them ;” but he says likewise, when we, like those of old, incline too much to think of the state of *others*, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” Religion is a per-

sonal thing; a thing of the heart, or it is nothing.

When God created the heavens and the earth we are told that "the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters," and so is it now, in the unconverted human heart, how often does the heaven-awakened wish arise in the soul to become a true follower of Christ. Oh, let not this wish be disregarded. If a desire be felt to lead a purer life, and to possess more charity in thought and action; if you would acquire that beautiful mode of life which you sometimes dream of, and sigh to think beyond your reach—a life devoted to the duties of this world, but with every sense refined, every ennobling thought cherished and indulged—if you experience difficulty, of yourself, in overcoming evil, or

**grieve to see your holy resolutions
fleeting as the morning dew, why do
you not adopt that Faith, which will
remove mountains?**

**Would you not value some talisman
having such precious virtue that, on
looking at it, when in trouble or ad-
versity, the trouble should vanish, and
the adversity change into a joy? Would
you not, in all earthly things, desire to
have a friend who, ever true to your
confidences, should yet advise you and
direct you with perfect sincerity and
profound wisdom? Verily, to those who
believe, prayer has this wonderful effi-
cacy, and Jesus Christ is this adorable
Friend. Prayer will strengthen in time
of trial, it will comfort in affliction,
it will enable you to procure all the
things you desire; or it will give you
perfect peace, lacking their possession.**

The believer has inward joy even in time of trial, for he feels that he is beloved by Him from whom each trial comes. A truly religious spirit brings to its happy possessor all the pleasures this world is capable of affording ; and it secures the abiding peace of a humble and loving heart. The most precious of all gifts, the most valuable of all possessions, is a prayerful and thankful spirit ; the one quality bringing down from heaven itself all blessings, the other sanctifying and enriching every joy.

Read the New Testament, and seriously consider what spiritual and moral results it seems calculated to produce if sincerely believed and deeply felt ? Will not the New Testament idea of sin, when engrafted in the mind, deter from the commission of it ? Will

it not reform the character, by leading to repentance ; soften the heart by exciting contrition ; increase the tenderness and susceptibility of the conscience ; and in many ways constrain the soul to hate evil and to choose good ?

Oh ! come to the right decision at once. It is always a matter of regret to those who eventually acquaint themselves with God, that it was so late before they learned the knowledge of his ways. Set to work then earnestly with this great undertaking ; there will be the less sin to repent of, and sooner will be realized the joys of believing.

The voice of the *church* of God calleth thee to join it.

The voice of the *Spirit* of God calleth thee to join his people.

The voice of *conscience* calleth thee in its deep earnest whispers, and telleth thee to join the church.

Thou hast not done this; thou standest aloof from the army of the Most High. The great conflict—the mighty battle between the hosts of Christ Jesus and those of Satan—is going on in the world; but thou, as though thou hadst no part in it, standest back from the church of Christ. The Captain of thy salvation calleth thee to join him; every blessing thou possessest whispereth the same to thee; for all were purchased for thee by the blood of Christ.

The voice of Jesus—of him to whom thou owest all things—calleth thee to join the ranks that are fighting under his banner; to enter among those who are being taught by Him the way of

life; to give thine influence, whatever it be, great or small, to the side of heaven; for in his love and compassion he deigns to accept the aid that feeble mortals give. Christ could do well without thee, reader! for legions of the angelic host stand waiting to receive his word. "He mildly rules the host of heaven, and holds the powers of hell in chains." He can do well without thee, but never, never, canst thou do without him. Whether thou art in heart his friend or his enemy, everything thou possessest hour by hour, moment by moment,—thy life, thy breath, thy very being,—thou art receiving the continuance of from his hand; even as at the first thou didst receive them from him. Every breath thou drawest is by his permission; every blessing thou receivest is a gift

from God. He is *forbearing* in his love, and doth not upbraid thee with thine ingratitude—seeking to lead thee to himself by kindness; seeking to draw thee by the sweet bonds of his own affection, till thou findest rest, and safety, and happiness, in him.

There is an *outward* joining of the church, with which the heart goes not; and which is but a deceiving of the world, and of the individual who so unites himself with it. Religion is a thing of the *heart*; it has to do with the *affections*; it has its centre in the *soul*. Give thy heart to God, reader, and give thyself with all thine energies to his work. His church is his army,—enlist among his followers. His church is his vineyard,—go, work within it. Christ Jesus is the Head over it,—go, learn of him. The Holy

Spirit is the dew that descends upon it, watering every little hill of Zion,—go, pray that upon *thee* the dews of that Spirit may descend.

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” said the Saviour,—go, and by earnest prayer enter by Jesus into the church on earth; by-and-by, he will be thy way of entrance into the church in *Heaven*. He is the *Truth*,—go to him, he will teach thee all the truth. He is the *Life*,—go to him, and *keep* by him, and thou shalt live for ever.

Amongst those individuals who hesitate to join the visible church, we may number—

1st, Those who are merely procrastinating.

2nd, Those who think they are neutral, but are not.

3rd, Those who cannot find a church pure enough.

4th, Those who from the fear of hereafter disgracing the church, hesitate to join one.

These all *may* be of the spiritual Israel, though by outward association they have not yet connected themselves with the church of Jesus; and are thus shutting themselves out from the enjoyment of innumerable and blessed privileges. But while these *may* be of the spiritual Israel, there are others who most assuredly are not. The Spirit of God is striving to lead them to salvation, but they resist its influence, and endeavour to drown the voice of conscience, because both trouble them. Some of this number — we hope but few — join not the church of God because

the language of their hearts to him is, "We seek not the knowledge of thy ways."

The fearful end of one of this class occurs to the memory of the writer. He had maintained this awful spirit of rebellion during a long life, and being well known to her revered father, the latter in friendly converse was one day begging him to go with him to a place of worship, and *try* what he thought of it. He refused, satirically asking "what they could tell him there worth hearing?" "They will tell you of a Saviour, sir," was the reply. "Saviour!" cried the old gentleman, with a burst of passion; "I don't *know* such a man;" and turning about, he walked away. That very night his soul was required of him. Seated at the fire-side in his elegant dwelling,

his family turned to speak to him, but he was dead.

To each of the four classes described we will now address ourselves; reserving the resisters of God's grace for the ensuing chapter.

First, To *Procrastinators*.

"Youth is not rich in time; it may be poor," said one of the noblest writers that England ever boasted of. Listen, then, youthful reader, to one, who, being deeply impressed both with the frail uncertainty of human life, and with the blessed nature of those privileges from which thy procrastination is excluding thee, would fain urge thee to consider these things,—to think seriously, pray earnestly, decide wisely, and act upon thy decision.

Rouse thyself, and shake off the cobweb fetters of procrastination with

which Satan is binding thee, though thou knowest it not. They are weak as the threads of a gossamer; but their nature is poisonous, and they are robbing thee of strength. Shake thyself from them; break through the evil influence of habit; go to God and ask his forgiveness of thy loiterings hitherto; for much of the precious time God gave thee, and many of the blessed privileges he provided thee, have been wasted through them; and, from a loitering, procrastinating spirit, thou hast neglected to improve the talents with which he has entrusted thee,—forgetting they were his, and that hereafter thou must give account of all.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,” saith the voice of God. Up, then, youthful

reader, and let the language of thy soul be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The Holy Scripture is the great directory;—go, search within it; and as thou readest over the writings of the Apostles of Jesus, thou wilt find directions clear and explicit, so that all may understand. The Bible is a *mirror*; if thou lookest there with a humble and prayerful spirit, asking of God to give thee understanding, thou wilt see what manner of being thou art; and what is required by God of such a one as thou art. The peculiarities of thy character and situation in life are all well and clearly known to him. It is *His* book; the light which alone can give us understanding in it is *His* light; and we are his property, whether we are ac-

knowledging it or not. We are his by a threefold tie: he has *created*, and *redeemed*, and *preserved* us. Enter, therefore, *humbly* into his presence; for see! the meeting is between the High and Lofty One and thy soul. It becometh thee, therefore, to be serious while thou askest with reverential awe, "Lord, what wilt thou have *me* to do?"

If, on consulting the mirror of the gospel, thou findest that the great change of heart spoken of in the third chapter of St. John, the first eighteen verses, has not passed upon thee, go to God, in the deep earnestness of thy soul, and beseech him to effect it for thee. This is a thing of no slight import, for the Saviour of the world declared that those who have it not cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God.

A fine writer of the 17th century gives two marks whereby we may try ourselves, in order to ascertain whether we belong to the spiritual Israel or not; namely,—

1st. Taking God for our chief good.

2nd. Heartily accepting Christ for our only Saviour and Lord.

Art thou doing this, young reader? Taking God for thy chief, above all other good; art thou relying on Christ as the sole means of thy salvation? canst thou give up all things rather than give up God? and is Christ not only the Saviour on whom alone thou art trusting, but the Lord, to whom thy soul is rendering cheerful and obedient service?

It is not natural to any human being to do these things; and whenever an affirmative answer can be returned,

there has been upon that soul a supernatural work, even the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit; and that soul has been born into the kingdom of Christ's spiritual church.

Generally speaking, the time when this great change is effected upon the heart can be clearly ascertained; and in looking back in after years on the path of life's by-gone pilgrimage, the individual can fix upon it without a doubt; it stands out in bold, distinct relief, and the bright radiance of a heavenly sunshine yet lingers sweetly upon it in memory.

In some cases, however, this change has been wrought so gradually, that the particular point of time can scarcely be discerned; but the two *distinguishing* marks yet hold good.

Art thou then reader, at this time,

“taking God for thy chief good”? Art thou depending upon Christ as thy Saviour, and obeying him as thy Lord? If so, thou art of the spiritual church of Jesus; and it is at once thy duty and thy privilege to number thyself openly amongst his followers. Defer it no longer, for it will aid thee greatly in helping onward the cause of God; in blessing the souls of thy fellow beings; and will be to thine own soul as the unsealing of many springs of the refreshing waters of everlasting life. Consider, if God had indeed vouchsafed thee the salvation of thine own soul, but forbidden thee to inscribe thy name amongst those who form his church, his enlisted army, his witnesses, his children, wouldst thou feel no grieving of heart that this honour was kept back from thee,

and given to others ; as though God were ashamed of thee ? Surely thou wouldst ; but God, even thy God, will acknowledge and receive thee, if thou wilt only come forth from the world, and give thyself to him.

Secondly, *To those who think that they are neutral, and are not.*

“He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.”—Luke xi. 23. The influence which even a *child's* example may exert over the souls of others is often very powerful. There is a perpetual action and re-action going on in the moral world ; soul influencing soul, life influencing life, heart influencing heart. Every individual is placing the weight of his influence, whether it be great or small, either

in the one or the other of the two balances, containing the world's evil, and its good. It is the imperative duty of every redeemed soul to be on the side of Him who has paid the high price of his redemption; if he be not on this side, not placing all his weight of influence in the balance of the good, by which Jesus standeth; then he is on the opposing side, and, though only by negative action, is retarding the work of God. He is doing positive evil also; for many, influenced by his example, are encouraged to stand aloof; they in turn influence others, and they others; the circles of influence multiply and widen, for the number of idle by-standers is increasing continually, through the power of his example; his own sin of omission is multiplied and magnified inconceiv-

ably through that of others ; and inasmuch as he was the first moving principle, the mainspring, he will be accountable for it to God ; and all this while Satan rejoices that so many are kept idle, to say the least, when they might be working the works of God against him. By every good thou mightest do, but dost not, the scale of the world's evil which he is seeking to fill, gets heavier and heavier. Thou art serving his purpose while thou standest aloof ; and thou art retarding the work of God.

Reader, if thou art one of these mistaken by-standers, and yet art of the spiritual Israel, grieve thy Saviour no longer ; join openly, nobly, the phalanx that is making war against the enemy ; and while thou art blessed there, thou wilt be a blessing. If thou

art not of the spiritual Israel, see to it that thou seek the Saviour; the longer thou hesitatest, the worse thy case will be; follow him, till he bring thee into his fold; and join thyself to his people, who are both seeking salvation themselves, and seeking to spread the news of it to others.

Thirdly, *To those who cannot find a church pure enough.*

Many are of this class—seeking for purity in others, instead of seeking to attain to it themselves. We shall never find a perfect church till we enter into the perfect heaven. Reader, ask thyself these questions, “How should I look, with all my imperfections, my weaknesses, my shortcomings, if I were numbered in a church, all the other members of which had

attained perfection ? To which among them should I look for sympathy ? Who among them could enter into my feelings ?" Alas ! thou wouldst be weighed down under a sense of thine own inferiority. To which, of that perfect community, couldst thou be a helper and a friend ? for a church, like an assembly, is designed for mutual assistance ; but there thou couldst render none, and would indeed be the only drag there was upon the rest. If thou art of the spiritual Israel go to Jesus, and learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart. He, though he had left the hosts of heaven, the perfected and glorified spirits, disdained not companionship with his disciples ; though one was a traitor, another denied him, and in the season when as a human being he most needed their support

and sympathizing affection, they all forsook him and fled. If thou art not of Israel, go to him who is perfect purity; and seek of him his grace and Spirit to bring that purity into thine own heart; join the church, and, though in the present state it is an imperfect one, it will aid thee in gaining the purity thou seekest.

Finally, amongst those who may be of the spiritual Israel, we will address a few words to the class which we last mentioned, namely, *Those who, from a fear of bringing disgrace upon it, hesitate to join the church.*

Youthful reader! If thou desirest earnestly to know, and love, and live to God, thou wilt find in the companionship of those whose aims and wishes are like thine own, a precious and refreshing help. Unite thyself

to those who have enrolled themselves as God's professing people. They will make thee welcome, and God will give his blessing to an association commenced expressly with a view to aid in serving him. The Almighty has a church in this world, which he himself has established here. It is divided into many sections, differing in various minor points of doctrine and discipline; but all uniting in the grand doctrines held forth in God's most holy word. Look amongst these sections of the church, pray earnestly that the Spirit and providence of God may direct thy choice; decide not rashly, for those who frequently move from section to section seldom make progress in religion, seldom gain much good, and seldom achieve much. Then having thought seriously, and prayed ear-

nestly, and decided carefully, fear not to enrol thyself as a member. *Day by day*, if thou lookest to God for help, he will enable thee to do thy duty. Thou wilt find this an easier, pleasanter, and infinitely more profitable work, when associated with others, as a church member, than ever it has been to thee alone. Many are the sweets of church communion; many are its privileges. Enter into this hallowed association, and thine only regret will be, as years are rolling onward, that thou didst not avail thyself of them at an earlier period of thy life.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THOSE WHO JOIN NOT THE CHURCH
OF GOD, BECAUSE THEY ARE RESISTING
THE DRAWINGS OF THE SPIRIT, AND
STIFLING THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE.

HAVING addressed ourselves in the previous chapter to those who, with the exception of the rebellious, *may* be of God's spiritual church, though not yet connected with his professing people, the volume must not close without a few words to those who most assuredly are *not* yet connected either with the one or with the other,—either with the visible or with the invisible church of the Most High.

Young reader ! If thou formest one of this mistaken and reckless band, I beseech thee let the past suffice for having done so foolishly What ! *resisting* the blessed influences of the Spirit of thy Maker ! turning a deaf ear to the pleadings of him whose earnest love for thee urges him to seek thy happiness ! who is calling thee out from the wilderness of this world, to bring thee into a sweeter paradise than was the garden of Eden ! resisting Him whose arm will shield thee in the time of danger ! whose wisdom will guide thee in the time of difficulty ! whose love will bless thee, and make thee a blessing ! Grieve him no more ; resist him no further ; close thine ears against his voice no longer ; for its accents are those of the tenderest compassion, and the music of its tones

is giving to heaven its ecstasy and joy. Look upwards with the eye of faith; what a countless company above are witnessing thy conduct; doubtless some among them have known and loved thee here; in the days of their earthly pilgrimage they have offered many a weeping prayer for thee; and now, though they have entered into the bliss of heaven, their thoughts still turn tenderly to earth; and they bend with solicitous affection over thee,—the poor, erring, straying one.

Is it possible that *thou* canst increase the joys of heaven? Yes, even this is possible. God has mysteriously linked the two worlds together; there is a golden chain of love uniting them; like a mighty harp-string, it bears sweet reverberations from world to world; and thy conversion, reader,

would echo with blissful melody up into the region where Jesu's followers are *resting*. The hosts of heaven love those on earth; they *rejoice* in their happiness. God is glorified when erring man enters upon the path that leads to heaven. And we, shall not we rejoice, when we are the greatest gainers?

Oh! close thine ears no longer to the voice of God. *Yield* to the drawings of his blessed Spirit; stifle no more the voice of conscience, for God placed that faithful monitor within thee that it might warn thee of danger, and remind thee of duty. Treat it no more as an enemy, for conscience is thy *friend*. Act thou in accordance with the words and will of God, and conscience will bear sweet testimony for thee.

Go then over from the side of Satan to that of Jesus; but go with *supplications*, for thou hast sinned against the Lord. He is a pure, and high, and holy God, whom thou hast been long grieving,—long withstanding. Therefore go to him *humbly*, and seek for the pardon of thy sins.

Amongst those who were enumerated in the foregoing chapters, there is still one class more to be addressed—namely—Those who by their *practice* are *defying* the *God of Israel*.

Awful delusion! deplorable blindness! Yet, even among this class of the openly wicked, *some* of the youthful are to be found. If the eye of such a one should rest upon these pages, oh! let that soul pause, and consider well; let it remember that life is as it were every moment a fresh

gift from God; and that ere another hour has passed, that life may be withdrawn.

Surrounded on all sides by God, shall we, whose breath is in our nostrils, stand out against our Maker? Shall the creature of a day, called into existence at the Creator's word, fancy he can throw off the rule of Him who sways the sceptre of the universe?

Oh! mistaken, misguided mortal, give up thy madness! and, weeping at the foot of *Calvary*, mourn over the sins of thy heart and life,—sins which caused the agony of the redeeming God.

Look at Jesus! he was the mighty God, as well as feeble man. Yet, see how he writhed, while drinking the bitter cup. He drank it for *thee*. Oh! let it not, then, be in vain. Do

not *thou* have to drain it to the dregs, amid the woe and agony of eternal death; for even *yet* Jesus loves thee, and mourns over thy hardness and impenitency of heart. "Turn ye, turn ye," saith he, "for why will ye die?" why rush madly on to destruction, to save thee from which I suffered so much? He hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, or long ere now, thou wouldst have been in the place where hope never comes. "God is love!" therefore thou art not consumed. But he is a God of justice! therefore turn, lest he whet his sword against thee; and then, even a great ransom shall not deliver thee out of his hand.

If thou decide rightly, and go as a penitent to the Saviour, and become joined in blessed covenant with Him—

thou, to devote thyself entirely to Him in holiness and purity of life, and He, to give thee the saving benefit of His sufferings, death, and intercession—the church of God will rejoice over thee; angels will rejoice over thee; perfected spirits will rejoice over thee; and the song will be heard concerning *thee*, “The dead is alive; the lost is found.” Thou wilt have made the “*great choice*” and decided rightly, and heaven will rejoice in *thy* happiness.

CHAPTER XII.

TIME BUT THE DAYBREAK OF OUR
EXISTENCE.

"This is the bud of being—the dim dawn,—
The twilight of our day."

YOUNG.

ALL praise, then, to Him who has given the splendid immortality that is yet to come.

If the *dawn* of life have so sweet a radiance as that which the gospel of Christ Jesus sheds upon it, what will the brightness of the everlasting day be, when the hopes which are now just beginning to unfold themselves, burst upon the redeemed soul in all the glory of the realizing light? This

is the time of conflict for the church of Jesus; *then* will be the time of triumph and everlasting joy. This is the time for working; that, for reaping the fruits of labour, and watching, and prayers, and tears. Here, the human spirit, though born of God, and undying in her existence as her immortal Sire, is weak, often way-worn and weary; but ere long she will be rejoicing in all the healthy vigour of undecaying strength, and be rich in all the wealth of the celestial city. Here, exposed to obloquy, and sometimes mourning under the unkind treatment of fellow beings; there, dwelling in a region of pure celestial love. The storms of earth over; the tears of earth wiped away; the sighs of earth hushed into peace and *blessedness*; the boding fears of earth

banished, in the full assurance of endless safety ; the pain of earth scarce coming into memory ; for the former things shall have passed away.

Young reader ! set thyself in early youth to serve thy God. Earth's bewildering cup is mixed deeply with disappointment. If thou drain it, thou wilt find its poison, though now it may seem only to sparkle with tempting radiance before thine eyes.

God is the centre of all true happiness. Get *near* to him. Heaven is the place of pure and perfect enjoyment. *Seek* to prepare for it. Even the very *preparation* for that land is the *richest happiness* thou wilt ever find on earth.

“ Come, while the blossoms of thy years are
brightest,
Thou youthful wanderer in a flowery maze ;
Come, while the restless heart is bounding
lightest,

And joy's pure sunbeams tremble in thy ways;
Come, while sweet thoughts, like summer buds
 unfolding,
Waken rich feelings in the careless breast,
While yet thy hand the ephemeral wreath is
 holding,—
Come, and secure interminable rest."

"Then look not back! O, triumph in the
 strength
Of an exalted purpose! Eagle-like,
Press sun-ward on. Thou shalt not be alone.
Have but an eye on God, as surely God
Will have an eye on thee: press on! press
 on!"

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